



Ms. Jillian Van Turnhout

jillianvanturnhout@gmail.com

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Re: 1926 Census

Dear Ms. Van Turnhout,

As Minister of State with delegated responsibility for the Central Statistics Office, I would like to thank you for your recent letter about the release of the 1926 Census. Thanks also for sharing your family history. I wish you every success in your continuing research. I know that genealogical research is a source of great interest to many people, and that the 1901 and 1911 Census returns are a very valuable resource in that regard.

As you know, the 1926 Census was undertaken under the 1926 Statistics Act which did not permit any access to Census records, at any time. The Statistics Act, 1993 repealed the 1926 and 1946 Statistics Acts, and provided for the release of census forms 100 years after the date of the relevant Census. This applies to censuses from the 1926 census on. At the time the retrospective introduction of the 100 years exemption was seen by some as undermining the original guarantee given to householders, but notwithstanding this was generally accepted as a reasonable compromise given that relatively few people would still be alive after 100 years. This means that under the current legislation the 1926 census records cannot be open to the public by the National Archives until the year 2026.



In considering the question of publication of the 1926 Census, the Government has had to keep in mind any possible impact that early release might have on the confidence of the public in the present day guarantees of statistical confidentiality that the CSO gives to its respondents.

Confidentiality and privacy are rightly issues of great concern for the public. The legal guarantee of confidentiality that comes with the census, along with the untarnished reputation of the CSO in upholding this guarantee in practice, is important in persuading the public to disclose their private information on the census form. Great care must be taken to ensure that any change would not undermine public confidence in the CSO, which could have the potential to seriously damage the return of data by respondents.

If the records were to be released before the expiry of 100 years, a major change in legislation and policy would be required to allow for such an early release. This is not currently being proposed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Regina Doherty', is written above the printed name.

Regina Doherty, T.D.
Minister of State